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SUBJECT: CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS CONFERENCE A SUCCESS
DESPITE GOG'S SNUB

¶1. (U) Interest in security policy by non-government actors has increased in the seven weeks following the August 14 conclusion of the second Embassy-sponsored Civil-Military Relations (CMR) conference. Despite the GoG's decision not to participate, opposition MPs, retired military, the private sector, academics, and leading media voices debated civil society's relationship to security mechanisms, strategic resource prioritization and management, public diplomacy, and other leadership concepts. The Institute for Strategic and International Studies, a Guyanese think tank formed after the first CMR conference in December 2007, took an active role in leading discussions and drafting a plan of action for security and submitting it to the GoG.

¶2. (U) In addition, Guyanese graduates of the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies (CHDS) have taken steps to form a non-partisan alumni association to encourage civil society's constructive engagement in security strategy, and the Embassy has received requests from at least two other organizations to discuss civil-military matters further.

¶3. (SBU) Comment. The lack of an official presence in the conference was a setback in Post's efforts to convince the GoG to better identify its national security priorities and more efficiently allocate USG military assistance. The GoG's absence was hardly a surprise, however, considering the degree to which the government usually feels threatened by external input into its most sensitive decisions, especially on issues related to national security policy. Encouraging Guyanese civilian voices in the security arena is likely the most effective way to encourage increased cooperation on USG priorities such as drug trafficking, though it remains to be seen if this approach will bear results. End Comment

Jones